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C O N F I D E N T I A L OTTAWA 001568

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EB/TRA, WHA/CAN, NEA, AND S/CT
PASS TSA FOR SUSAN WILLIAMS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/04/2012

TAGS: [ASEC](#) [FAIR](#) [PTER](#) [PINR](#) [CA](#) [LE](#)

SUBJECT: NO AIR CANADA FLIGHTS TO BEIRUT NOW

[1](#)1. Classified by Economic Minister Counselor Michael
Gallagher for reasons 1.5 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Transport Canada's Director of Security Jim Marriott confirmed that the Canadian Transportation Agency, the licensing arm of the Ministry, has suspended the license that had been issued in March to Air Canada for flights from Montreal to Beirut. The reason for the suspension is "national security." Marriott said this was a "victory" for those concerned about aviation security. Marriott added that Canada will be watching very closely for signs of any rapprochement between the U.S. and Lebanon (and Syria); in particular, whether the USG changes its policy regarding flights by U.S. carriers into Beirut.

[1](#)2. (C) Bruce Levy of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) told us Transport Canada will certainly be asked: 1. what has changed since the license was issued in March? and, 2. what was the influence of the United States on this decision? Levy said the first question will be very difficult to answer. As for the second, Levy said he had recommended that, if asked, Transport Canada acknowledge that the USG had conveyed its views, but that the Canadian government made the decision independently. Levy added that Air Canada has sold thousands of tickets for the Beirut flights already, primarily to Canada's large Lebanese community, so the decision to suspend the license for the flights will not be greeted with hosannas by everyone - especially as Air Canada is now in bankruptcy and needs revenue.

[1](#)3. (C) Air Canada representatives had no comment on the issue other than to say they expect to release a press announcement today.

[1](#)4. (C). Comment: While we let Canada know our views on this issue very clearly at several levels, our approach has always been private and behind the scenes. We strongly recommend that the Department and other agencies have minimal public comment on this. Given Canadian sensitivities about U.S. pressure, undue focus on the U.S. role could complicate our future security efforts. End Comment.
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